

TO THE PEOPLE OF COLORADO.

SYNOPSIS

ON THE

SAND CREEK INVESTIGATION.

DENVER, COLORADO, JUNE 1865.

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SAND CREEK INVESTIGATION.

DEVELOPED BY J. H. HARRIS.



TO THE PUBLIC.

In giving the evidence concerning the battle of Sand Creek to the world, I will state that I have selected only those portions which relate to my innocence or guilt concerning the commencement of the Indian war. Major Wynkoop's expedition to the Smoky Hill; the battle of Sand Creek; what my means of knowledge of the hostility of the Indians on Sand Creek were; and what reasons I had to believe that those Indians were hostile, and the source of trouble which originated the many false statements concerning myself and Sand Creek, and the brave men whom I had the honor to command, with an exposure of the conspiracy to swindle the Government, and how the wise men at Washington were imposed upon by the old men, Innocence and Cunning, which will show the mysterious operations of the machinery of the Interior Department in anything but favorable light to our Fort Lyon representatives, Colley and Smith.

I have also given copies of the orders from Major General S. R. Curtiss, commanding Department of Kansas, which, as a soldier, I was bound to obey.

Lieut. Clark Dunn, First Colorado Cavalry, under oath says:

While in pursuit of a band of Indians to recover stock stolen from the ranches on Bijou and other creeks, accompanied by a man by the name of Rippey, who had lost some of this stock, he overtook a party of Indians after a hard day's ride, and while halting to water, Mr. Rippey and a soldier rode forward to the herd driven by the Indians. Mr. Rippey recognized his stock and also recognized these Indians as the Indians who had taken it; that the soldier informed him that the Indians were in line loading their rifles and intended to fight; that the Indians would not listen to his question to talk with them, but advanced upon himself and command and fired upon them.

Certainly these could not have been the friendly Indians about which we have heretofore heard so much, if they were they had a strange manner of showing it.

Now, can any candid man charge me with commencing this war, after reading this evidence? I, at the time, was in Denver,

a hundred miles distant: a white man demands the protection of our troops that had been stationed at Camp Sanborn for that purpose, and in affording that protection, while endeavoring to recover the property of this white man from the Indians, of which they, the Indians, had robbed him, the Indians fired upon the troops. What would these High Officials desired these troops to have done? Refused assistance to that white man, and excused themselves upon the grounds that an Indian war might result from the taking of this stock from the Indians, and that they could not risk the occurrence of so dreadful a calamity? A few head of stock had better be stolen, a few white men had better be killed, than have a thing so dreadful happen. It will not do to make the Indians *angry*; it is better to feed them than to fight them. If the soldiers at Camp Sanborn had done thus you would have branded them as cowards, and rather than done this it were better to have killed them, as a true soldier prizes his honor more than his life.

Did not Lieut. Dunn do all that any man could have been expected to do under the circumstances, to avoid a collision with the Indians? Yet malicious and designing parties have endeavored to attach blame to me for this also.

Again, Major Wynkoop's expedition to the Smoky Hill with one hundred and twenty men and two pieces of artillery, which has been claimed by these parties would have resulted in the settlement of the Indian difficulties and the restoration of peace if Sand Creek had not occurred. Major Wynkoop and others, claim that the noble treatment received by the troops from the hands of the Indians, when the troops were at the mercy of the Indians, deserved better treatment than Sand Creek.

My only reply to these assertions is, read the evidence of Mr. Forbes, a disinterested soldier, serving under Major Wynkoop on that expedition, and well acquainted with the conduct of the Indians while the officers were in council, and well acquainted with the feelings of the soldiers, stating as he does, that the camp was poorly arranged for defense; that the soldiers were *guarded* by the Indians; and that finally, the enlisted men talked of breaking camp and returning to Fort Lyon without orders. That there was talk of there being too much whisky in the outfit. In the midst of a savage foe in such numbers that the troops were guarded by the Indians, and the officer of the day compelled to pray for the assistance of an Indian chief to coax the Indians to leave their artillery, and yet in the midst of all this danger, we hear of there being too much whisky in the outfit; that the men have confidence in their officers when they are sober, but did not like to trust themselves among the Indians when their officers had been drinking. Who could

blame them? If they had not been the bravest of the brave they would have all been butchered. It was evidently the coolness of the men, not the sagacity of the commanding officer, that saved them, and yet they have the audacity to state, because they were not all murdered through the blunders of their commanding officer, that the Indians were friendly, when their last act, as Mr. Forbessays, was to set fire to the grass to the windward of the camp.

Again, Mr. Valentine says, that Government mules, that the murdered blacksmith and soldiers had when the Indians attacked them, were brought into Fort Lyon, and Major Wynkoop made no attempt to recover them, though the murderers of his comrades were in the fort Major Wynkoop commanded. They openly exulted over their bloody deeds unrestrained, and this they call the road to peace! pacifying the noble red man,, by men wearing the uniform of officers. It is not surprising that the Indian believes himself to be the white man's superior. White men of the frontier, do you desire to become the servile dogs of a brutal savage? If you do this policy will suit you, though I thought differently and acted accordingly.

When I arrived at Fort Lyon on an expedition against the Indians in November, 1864, I was informed that the Indians on Sand Creek were hostile. Major Anthony commanding the post, whom I thought was better acquainted than any one else with the relations that existed between the Government and the Indians, as regarded peace or war, informed me, on different occasions, that the Indians were hostile; that he had repeatedly fired upon them; that the Indians had sent him word that if he wanted a fight, to come out to Sand Creek, and they would give him as big a fight as he wanted; that every man of his command would go gladly, and urged an immediate departure. Anthony after the battle of Sand Creek, exulted over the fight, and thought it was the biggest thing on record, and witnesses say they never heard him speak of it except exultingly.

Have I not shown all these facts by witnesses under oath, and can the people of Colorado, or the world, say, that though I had been governed by the most rigid rules of civilized warfare, that with such statements, from the commanding officer of a fort made to me, that my conduct could be adjudged anything but honorable. I am but human, and the same means of knowledge by which the public have been informed of the "Chivington Massacre," I was informed of the hostility of the Indians on Sand Creek. If Major Anthony, in representing the relations that existed between the troops and the Indians, willfully lied, then Major Anthony is the responsible party, and the world cannot consistently punish me for the crimes of others, for certainly, from all accounts, I will have enough to answer for without them.

The morning of the 29th day of November 1864 finds us before the village of the Indian foe. The first shot is fired by them. The first man who falls is white. No white flag is raised. None of the Indians show signs of peace, but flying to rifle pits already prepared, they fight with a desperation unequalled, showing their perfect understanding of the relations that existed as regards peace or war, as forty-nine killed and wounded soldiers too plainly testified. Our command consisted of nearly six hundred men. The fight continued till nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. Stephen Decatur swears that being detailed as clerk, in company with Lieut. Col. Bowen, he rode over the field where the fight had occurred and counted four hundred and fifty dead warriors, and that no more women and children were killed than would have been killed in a white village under like circumstances; that the women and children that were killed could not have been saved if the troops had tried; that they were in the rifle pits with the warriors; that there were very few women and children killed; that after he returned to the village he saw things that made him desire to kill more Indians; that he saw great numbers of white scalps, daguerreotypes, part of a lady's toilet, and children's wearing apparel. Would not such sights make any person feel as Stephen Decatur did? Stephen Decatur is a husband and a father, and how many harrowing thoughts of murder and suffering would a spectacle like this call up, and how many eudearing reminiscences would be swept into the gulf of horror on an occasion like this. Stephen Decatur has spent seven years among the Indians and is acquainted with them. He had been a soldier before, and speaks of this fight as being the hardest he ever saw, on both sides. He had seen the Lipan or Comanche Indians scalp their own dead. Husbands and fathers, under similar circumstances, what would you have done? Coaxed the chiefs to have taken their warriors away, or like white men and true soldiers, accepted their wager of battle and whipped them if you could. Yet this is all that was done at Sand Creek. Though hundreds of Colorado soldiers are to-day branded as murderers, and that in many instances by men without knowing or caring whether the charge be false or true. It is sufficient if he be a soldier, in the eyes of these malignant cowards. He must, as a natural consequence, be a murderer, while others wearing the uniform of officers, without the courage to perform a brave deed themselves, are the loudest to condemn the conduct of a brother soldier who wins a single laurel that they cannot steal. Such men are more to be feared than the crawling viper. Perjury, larceny or robbery are no obstacles in their road to vengeance, venomous as reptiles and cowardly as curs. But what is the cause of all this trouble—whence the source of

this cry of holy horror that has been rung with such startling effect upon the minds of the unsophisticated people of New England, the people generally of the States, and especially the bilious old maids in the United States Senate and House of Representatives? Why, it originates in the fertile minds of two Government employees, conspiring together to swindle the Government, as one of them states, out of \$25,000, through the influence of friends he has in Washington, and by whom he expects to get his claim allowed, probably some high official who is desirous of making an honest dollar by advocating the cause of the honest old men of the wilderness, the veracious John Smith, Indian interpreter, and that reliable, respectable old gentleman, Major Colley, Indian Agent. But under the solemn and binding obligations of an oath, what does Major Talbott say? Simply that Major Colley and John Smith stated to him that they would do anything to ruin Col. Chivington; that they were even equally interested in their trade with the Indians—one an Indian agent, the other Indian interpreter; that they had lost one hundred and five buffalo robes and two white ponies by Col. Chivington's attack on the Indian village at Sand Creek; that they would collect \$25,000 for it of the Government, and eventually damn Col. Chivington; that John Smith boastfully stated that the eastern papers would be filled with accounts of Sand Creek as a massacre; that they would go to Washington and represent to the committee on the Conduct of the War that Sand Creek was a massacre. What did they mean when they said they would do *anything* to ruin Col. Chivington? The word has a broad signification, and did they not include PERJURY? It appears to me, without any stretch of the imagination, they did. Take the expression we will go to Washington and represent Sand Creek as a massacre; the eastern papers will be filled with accounts of Sand Creek as a massacre, by letters from Fort Lyon, and we will do *anything* to ruin Col. Chivington, and draw your own conclusions. If it appears to you as it does to me, perjury would be no obstacle to these worthies in their road to vengeance. If they would deliberately conspire to rob the Government out of \$25,000, through the influence of their friends, would they not also be guilty of *perjury* to ruin their enemies? Then what conclusions are we compelled to arrive at? That perjury has been perpetrated by these worthies, abetted by their friends and the Honorable gentlemen who compose the Committee on the Conduct of the War; they whose piercing criticism has been a terror to evil doers in the States; they who, from their high order of intelligence, have been supposed to be able to draw aside the thick curtain that concealed the dark deeds of the adepts in crime, and allow the sunlight of truth and justice to shine in upon it,

are made the *innocent tools* of two ignerant old Indian trappers and traders, to wreak disgrace and ruin upon Col. Chivington and Colorado soldiers generally. Truly these two old gentlemen, Colley and Smith, must have read the Scriptures, for they appear to have been in Washington "as innocent as lambs and wary as foxes."

Now, fellow citizens, what do you think of the Chivington Massacre, whose horrors have filled so many columns of the papers in the States, and called down upon Colorado so many disgraceful epithets, while at the same time our enterprising freighters, emigrants, and settlers, with their wives and children, have been murdered, scalped, and their bodies horribly mutilated by these much abused sons of the plains. The citizens of Colorado have been paying famine prices for all they consumed; civilization retarded, and labor in our mines suspended, simply because these worthies and their friends had placed Colorado in the unenviable position of murderers, and the Government would not afford the protection we so much needed, though as soon as the Hon. Schuyler Colfax telegraphed to the Secretary of War of the defenceless position in which we were situated, twelve thousand soldiers are immediately sent upon the plains, under the gallant Connor, who will soon render the Platte route as safe for travel as the highway of an inhabited town, unless some Indian agent or Interpreter should lose a few dollars by the attack of his troops upon some Indian village, when probably our gallant commander would be removed and a more humane policy adopted.

Lo, the poor Indian, in thy untutored greatness, you have proved yourself, with the assistance of high officials, your friends, a good diplomat. You have long been a bone of contention, and many a villainous swindle has been perpetrated upon the Government in thy name and humanity, which would put to blush the unparalleled commander of the sons of sin, His Satanic Majesty, the Devil.

J. M. CHIVINGTON,
Late Col. 1st Cavalry of Colorado,
Commanding District of Colorado.